

INDIANA SUPREME COURT COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



DATA GRANT ANNUAL PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT October 1, 2008- September 30, 2009

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The following annual program report is being sent to:

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and is pursuant to the Administrative Provisions of the *Program Instructions* under Log Number: ACYF-CB-PI-06-05.

INTRODUCTION

The intent in meeting the overall strategy of the Data Collection and Analysis Grant is to conduct ongoing, meaningful and collaborative studies with the goal of strengthening court performance through review of past practices, observation of current practices, followed by implementation of recommendations developed as a result of well-planned, proposed and authorized studies. The overarching objective remains to involve all stakeholders in the improvement of court-oriented circumstances for attaining greater safety, permanency and well-being for youths in the Indiana Child Welfare System.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Development of ongoing, meaningful collaboration continues to be successful not only through interaction with members of the Multi-Disciplinary Task Force, named the Child Welfare Improvement Committee (**CWIC**), but also through the attendance at regularly scheduled meetings of the now well-established Supreme Court Alliance – Resources for Families (**SCARF**), a clearinghouse of current information and developments. Members include representatives from the Court Improvement Program (**CIP**), Judicial Technology and Automation Committee, (**JTAC**), Indiana Judicial Center (**IJC**), State Court Administration (**STAD**), Guardian Ad litem/Court Appointed Special Advocate (**GAL/CASA**), Pro Bono Project, and the Family Court Project. Consensus of the attendees demonstrates an extremely positive level of collaborative interaction and greater understanding of the directives and efforts of each program.

2. In accordance with the **CIP Data Grant 5 Year Strategic Plan**, improving Court performance by creating reporting forms and interactive methods to capture **CHINS** data in a single uniform database named *Odyssey* is continuing to move forward at a positive pace established in past years. With 92 counties historically

capturing data collection in a variety of methods, this standardization process is not without challenges and setbacks, but is generally being met with acceptance as it has now been implemented in several more counties. As outlined in Item #1 above, a representative from the Judicial Technology and Automation Committee (**JTAC**), responsible for this project, reports progress at regularly scheduled **SCARF** meetings.

3. In accordance with the **CIP Data Grant 5 Year Strategic Plan** a detailed data collection and analysis project reviewing all Termination of Parental Rights (**TPR**) appeals in the State of Indiana from 2003 through 2007 was conducted during fiscal year 2008, leading to recommendations for reformation of the Rules of Appellate Procedure to expedite appeals of cases terminating parental rights. The emphasis of the project in 2008 was to investigate methods to improve permanency in the lives of children awaiting adoption. The project included an in-depth review of all 539 cases appealed during the period, assembling data on filing issues, timeliness problems, statutory compliance and others. The analysis of the resulting data centered on the average number of days elapsing at critical stages of each appeal and the total time for each appeal to be completed. A forty-two page final report entitled "*A Statistical Analysis of Termination of Parental Rights Cases 2003 – 2007*" was presented to the Indiana CIP Executive Committee, and upon its recommendation, to the Indiana State Supreme Court Conference for review. As a result of this review, in late fiscal year 2008, the Supreme Court requested a presentation of recommendations to reform, streamline and expedite the appellate process as it relates to Termination of Parental Rights cases. The requested rule changes were initially formulated in early fiscal year 2009, and presented to the Indiana State Supreme Court Conference for advisement. After several revisions and modifications during the fiscal year, the documentation, currently labeled as proposed Appellate Rule 14.2, was presented to the Committee on Rules of Practice and Procedure. The committee will meet again to consider the revisions on December 18, 2009.

4. In January, 2009, a survey of all courts, stakeholders and practitioners in the state was conducted to gather information on the services available for the elderly citizens in Indiana. The important link to child welfare services was illuminated in the results, which indicated that elderly citizens acting as guardians of children in need of services (**CHINS**) are generally under-served, allowing for consideration and concentration on expansion of services by applicable groups in specific regions as funding allows. Additional information on the desired service areas to be developed for elderly citizens in positions of guardianship involving **CHINS** cases will be gathered in the future.

5. Also in accordance with the **CIP Data Grant 5 Year Strategic Plan**, Phase One of the Allen County, Indiana, pilot program for implementation of the Court Performance Measures In Child Abuse and Neglect Cases (**Toolkit**) began in earnest in April, 2009. The project involves collection of data on cases closed in 1997, 1998, and 1999, comparing those results to cases closed ten years later, in 2007, 2008, and 2009. Allen County first instituted court reforms under the CIP program in 1997. The performance enhancements and improvements since that period will be gauged, as well as the areas of necessary performance improvement that remain to be addressed. The evaluation will measure outcomes in all four areas: safety; permanency; due process; and, timeliness. The Indiana University Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (**CUPE**) will be providing analysis and review, as well as issuing the final reports under Phase Two of the project, which is expected to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2010. The results of the performance evaluations conducted under this pilot program will allow for less interruptive, smoother and more seamless implementation in other counties in Indiana, in future years.